

5. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

OVERVIEW

The Transportation Planning Branch of the North Carolina Department of Transportation has long recognized the importance of meaningful involvement of the public in transportation planning and decision-making. A series of Federal regulations have further emphasized and formalized the public involvement process in long-range transportation planning:

- Intermodal Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) in 1991;
- Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) in 1998; and
- Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) in 2005.

Input from the public has played an important role in identifying transportation needs and recommending solutions, and this section summarizes the process used to involve the public in developing the CTP.

STUDY INITIATION

The public “kick-off” of the CTP development process occurred at the FBRMPO TCC and TAC meetings in Asheville on April 19, 2007. However, much of the groundwork for the plan had already been established through the continuing, cooperative, comprehensive transportation planning process already in place at the time of this projects initiation. The NCDOT and the FBRMPO have been working for a number of years on a series of long-range transportation plans and travel demand models. These efforts predate the formation of FBRMPO in 2005, and included separate transportation plans and models for the Asheville MPO and the Hendersonville area, as well as older thoroughfare plans for some other jurisdictions. In 2005, these efforts led to development of a single regional travel demand model that covers most of Buncombe, Henderson, and Haywood Counties. This model, combined with public input, helped inform the 2005 FBRMPO Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), which in turn provides the basis for the CTP.

WORK SESSIONS

A series of work sessions with each county’s CTP Planning Committee were held in June of 2007 to explain the CTP process and gather input. These meetings were located in each of the counties:

- Haywood County – Wednesday, June 27;
- Buncombe County – Thursday, June 28; and
- Henderson County – Thursday, June 28 (regular TAC meeting).

PUBLIC WORKSHOPS

Building on information obtained in the work sessions, a set of draft maps and recommendations were prepared and presented to the public for review and comment in a series of three-hour “drop-in” workshops. Again, these meetings were held in each county:

- Henderson County – Tuesday, August 14;
- Haywood County – Wednesday, August 15; and
- Buncombe County – Thursday, August 16 (plus presentation at TCC meeting).

Draft CTP maps were available for review, and a presentation was given at each session, followed by an open discussion period. Written and spoken comments and questions were accepted. While the official